In the claims: Please amend the claims as follows. This listing of the claims replaces all previous listings.

1. (currently amended) A method by which a multimedia message is transcoded *en route* from a sending terminal via a messaging server to a receiving terminal, the method comprising:

a user agent of the sending terminal inserting, into the multimedia message, media characteristics of the multimedia message sufficient in detail to enable determining whether the multimedia message should be transcoded to accommodate multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

the messaging server reading the media characteristics of the multimedia message and deciding whether the multimedia message should be transcoded based only on a comparison of the inserted media characteristics of the multimedia message and actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

2. (previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the messaging server sends the multimedia message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server uses the inserted media characteristics of the multimedia message to itself decide if transcoding is needed.

3. (previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the messaging server sends the multimedia message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server uses the inserted media characteristics of the multimedia message to itself decide which parts of the multimedia message need transcoding.

4. (previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the messaging server determines, from the inserted media characteristics of the multimedia message, which parts of the multimedia message need transcoding and sends the multimedia message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed for any message part, and includes in the multimedia

message an indication of which parts of the multimedia message need transcoding.

5. (previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the messaging server determines, from the inserted media characteristics of the multimedia message, which parts of the multimedia message need transcoding and sends only those message parts requiring transcoding to a transcoding server.

6. (previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the transcoding is performed based on a comparison of the inserted media characteristics and the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal, without performing an analysis of the multimedia message to determine whether transcoding is needed.

7. (previously presented) A method as in claim 6, wherein the transcoding is performed without also performing even an analysis to determine which parts of the multimedia message need to be transcoded.

8. (previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the user agent inserts the media characteristics of the multimedia message into a field in the header of the multimedia message.

9. (previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the user agent inserts the media characteristics of the multimedia message into a header field in the body of the multimedia message.

10. (previously presented) A method as in claim 1, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message include image and video resolution, or number of frames and frame rate of visual content, or sampling rate of audio content.

11. (currently amended) A sending terminal, comprising a processor configured to:

determine media characteristics of a multimedia message sufficient in detail to enable a messaging terminal to determine whether the multimedia message should be transcoded based only on a comparison of actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of a

receiving terminal and the inserted media characteristics, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

insert the media characteristics of the multimedia message into the multimedia message.

12. (currently amended) A messaging server, comprising a processor configured to:

obtain media characteristics of a multimedia message that are inserted into the multimedia message intended for a receiving terminal, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

decide whether the multimedia message should be transcoded based only on comparing the media characteristics of the multimedia message with actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

13. (currently amended) A system, comprising a sending terminal and a messaging server, wherein:

the sending terminal is configured to insert, into a multimedia message for a receiving terminal, media characteristics of the multimedia message sufficient in detail to enable determining whether the multimedia message should be transcoded to accommodate multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

the messaging server is configured to read the media characteristics of the multimedia message and decide whether the multimedia message should be transcoded based only on a comparison of the media characteristics and actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

14. (previously presented) A system as in claim 13, wherein the messaging server is further configured to transcode the multimedia message based on the inserted media characteristics

and the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal, without performing an analysis of the multimedia message to determine media characteristics of the multimedia message relevant to deciding whether transcoding is needed.

15. (previously presented) A system as in claim 13, wherein the messaging server is further configured to send the multimedia message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server is configured to use the inserted media characteristics to decide if transcoding is needed.

16. (previously presented) A system as in claim 13, wherein the messaging server is further configured to send the multimedia message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed, and the transcoding server is configured to use the inserted media characteristics to decide which parts of the message need transcoding.

17. (previously presented) A system as in claim 13, wherein the messaging server is further configured to determine, from the inserted media characteristics, which parts of the multimedia message need transcoding and to send the multimedia message to a transcoding server if transcoding is needed for any message part, and to include in the multimedia message an indication of which parts of the multimedia message need transcoding.

18. (previously presented) A system as in claim 13, further comprising a transcoding engine for transcoding the multimedia message, wherein the transcoding is performed based on a comparison of the inserted media characteristics and the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal, without performing an analysis of the multimedia message to determine whether transcoding is needed.

19. (previously presented) A computer program product comprising: a computer readable storage structure embodying computer program code thereon for execution by a computer processor in a sending terminal, wherein said computer program code includes instructions for performing the method of claim 21.

20. (previously presented) A computer program product comprising: a computer readable

storage structure embodying computer program code thereon for execution by a computer processor in a messaging server, wherein said computer program code includes instructions for performing the method of claim 24.

21. (currently amended) A method for use by a sending terminal comprising:

determining media characteristics for media components of a multimedia message intended for a receiving terminal, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message are sufficient in detail to enable determining whether the multimedia message should be transcoded to accommodate multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal, further wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

inserting the media characteristics of the multimedia message into the multimedia message.

22. (previously presented) A method as in claim 21, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are inserted into a field in the header of the multimedia message.

23. (previously presented) A method as in claim 21, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are inserted into a header field in the body of the multimedia message.

24. (currently amended) A method for use by a messaging server comprising:

obtaining media characteristics of the multimedia message that are inserted into the multimedia message intended for a receiving terminal, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

deciding whether the multimedia message should be transcoded based only on a comparison of the inserted media characteristics and actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

25. (previously presented) A method as in claim 24, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are obtained from a field in the header of the multimedia message.

26. (previously presented) A method as in claim 24, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are obtained from a header field in the body of the multimedia message.

27. (currently amended) An apparatus for transmitting a multimedia message, the apparatus comprising a processor configured to:

determine media characteristics for a media component of the multimedia message, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

insert the media characteristics of the multimedia message into the multimedia message.

28. (previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 27, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are provided in a field in the header of the multimedia message.

29. (previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 27, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are provided in a header field in the body of the multimedia message.

30. (currently amended) A method for transmitting a multimedia message, the method comprising:

determining media characteristics for a media component of the multimedia message, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

inserting the media characteristics of the multimedia message in the multimedia message.

31. (previously presented) A method as in claim 30, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are provided in a field in the header of the multimedia message.

32. (previously presented) A method as in claim 30, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are provided in a header field in the body of the multimedia message.

33. (currently amended) An apparatus for processing a multimedia message, the apparatus comprising a processor configured to:

receive media characteristics of a media component of the multimedia message in a field of the multimedia message, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

determine whether the multimedia message should be transcoded based at least in part on a comparison of the received media characteristics of the multimedia message and actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of a receiving terminal.

34. (previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are provided in a field in the header of the multimedia message.

35. (previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are provided in a header field in the body of the multimedia message.

36. (previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the processor is further configured to:

determine media components of the multimedia message which need transcoding based at least on the respective received media characteristics; and

transmit at least a part of the multimedia message to a transcoding server.

37. (previously presented) An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the processor is further configured to:

transcode a media component of the message based at least on the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

38. (currently amended) A method for processing a multimedia message, the method comprising:

receiving media characteristics of a media component of the multimedia message in a field of the multimedia message, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

determining whether the multimedia message should be transcoded based at least in part on a comparison of the received media characteristics of the multimedia message and actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of a receiving terminal.

39. (previously presented) A method as in claim 38, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are received in a field in the header of the multimedia message.

40. (previously presented) A method as in claim 38, wherein the multimedia message has a header portion and a body portion, and the media characteristics of the multimedia message are received in a header field in the body of the multimedia message.

41. (previously presented) A method as in claim 38, further comprising:

determining which media components of the multimedia message need transcoding based at least on the respective received media characteristics; and

transmitting to a transcoding server at least the media components of the multimedia message that need transcoding.

42. (previously presented) A method as in claim 38, further comprising:

transcoding a media component of the multimedia message based at least on the actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of the receiving terminal.

43. (canceled) ~~A method as in claim 24, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: image or video resolution, number of frames, frame rate of visual content, sampling rate of audio content.~~

44. (canceled) ~~An apparatus as in claim 27, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: image or video resolution, number of frames, frame rate of visual content, sampling rate of audio content.~~

45. (canceled) ~~A method as in claim 30, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: image or video resolution, number of frames, frame rate of visual content, sampling rate of audio content.~~

46. (canceled) ~~An apparatus as in claim 33, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: image or video resolution, number of frames, frame rate of visual content, sampling rate of audio content.~~

47. (canceled) ~~A method as in claim 38, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: image or video resolution, number of frames, frame rate of visual content, sampling rate of audio content.~~

48. (previously presented) An apparatus, comprising:

means for receiving media characteristics of a multimedia message that are inserted in a field of the multimedia message, wherein the media characteristics of the multimedia message comprise at least one of the following: a number of frames, a frame rate of visual content, or a sampling rate of audio content; and

means for determining whether the multimedia message should be transcoded based on a comparison of the media characteristics of the multimedia message and actual or assumed multimedia capabilities of a receiving terminal.